



# One Less<sup>®</sup>

A STRATEGY FOR SAFER COMMUNITIES

## Moving Evidence-Based Decision Making Forward in Wisconsin



### Position

Wisconsin's State Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) has partnered with the National Institute of Corrections' Evidence-Based Decision Making (EBDM) Initiative as the model for state and local criminal justice system improvement efforts. These efforts are focused on the following goals for criminal justice system improvement in Wisconsin: Reduce harm, improve public safety, and improve the quality of life; promote fairness and equal treatment; use resources effectively. The EBDM initiative will support progress toward these goals by providing a framework that is founded on research, collaboration, measureable outcomes, and continual improvement.

## The Value of Evidence-Based Decision Making

Wisconsin has a strong history of improving its criminal justice system by utilizing evidence-based practices. To further this end, the Wisconsin State Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) partnered with the National Institute of Corrections' Evidence-Based Decision Making (EBDM) Initiative in 2014. Demonstrable success is achieved with EBDM through "...using data and research to inform and guide decision making across the justice system" (EBDM definition, <https://info.nicic.gov>). Specifically, the EBDM initiative focuses on the following goals to improve the criminal justice system:

- ♦ Reduce harm, improve public safety, and improve quality of life.
- ♦ Promote fairness and equal treatment.
- ♦ Use resources effectively.

Successful EBDM implementation relies on research, collaboration, measureable outcomes, and continual improvement resulting in significant cost savings to the taxpayer and the improvement of the system as a whole.

### *The Four EBDM Principles*

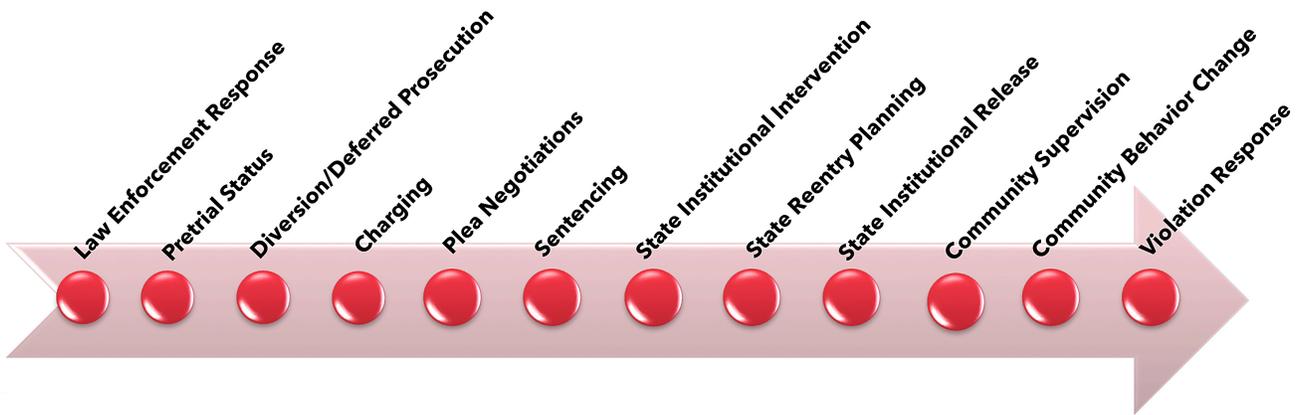
EBDM implementation is based on four principles:

- ♦ The professional judgment of criminal justice system decision makers is enhanced when informed by evidence-based knowledge (research).
- ♦ Every interaction within the criminal justice system offers an opportunity to contribute to harm reduction.
- ♦ Systems achieve better outcomes when they operate collaboratively.
- ♦ The criminal justice system will continually learn and improve when professionals make decisions based on the collection, analysis, and use of data and information.

The use of evidence-based practices in Wisconsin has seen ongoing success with the implementation of treatment courts and diversion programs. Wisconsin's participation in the EBDM initiative will further bolster the improvements and savings that result from these efforts.

Wisconsin's EBDM efforts are supported and led by the CJCC, which is co-chaired by the Wisconsin Attorney General and the Wisconsin Department of Corrections Secretary. The CJCC created an EBDM subcommittee dedicated to the project. This subcommittee includes state and local stakeholders from traditional and non-traditional

## JUSTICE SYSTEM DECISION POINTS



criminal justice system professionals. Specifically, the members include law enforcement, prosecutors, defense counsel, judges, and corrections officials, as well as representatives from counties, advocacy groups, health services, members of the public, and the state legislature.

The initial implementation of EBDM in Wisconsin involved the creation of two local teams from counties – by Milwaukee and Eau Claire Counties. Subsequently, six more local teams from counties have been formed including Chippewa, La Crosse, Marathon, Outagamie, Rock, and Waukesha Counties. The collaborative approach between state and local government strengthens the long-term vision, and in turn leverages available resources for positive system change.

The criminal justice system is large, complex, and composed of many individual agencies. Public perception and publicity can create barriers to change and improvement to the system can seem daunting in the face of long-standing policies and procedures. The EBDM framework provides a clear and structured approach to address future strategic planning and improvement. The systematic approach of applying research to real-world challenges in the criminal justice system helps guide decisions made at all levels of the system.

In practice, the EBDM initiative focuses on reviewing all the major justice system decision points within the criminal justice system. The graphic above shows each possible decision point as a person moves through the justice system. At each decision point, gaps or opportunities for improvement can be identified, and research can be consulted to help determine the best direction to take. Changes are then implemented, with a focus on specific, measureable outcomes that monitor their impact both at individual decision points and across the system.

By applying EBDM principles, Wisconsin is better positioned to fully engage in meaningful criminal justice system improvement and significant cost savings. Per the *EBDM Framework*, “To reach their full potential, evidence-based practices cannot simply be placed alongside past practice or through the piecemeal exchange of one past practice for a new one. Instead, an evidence-based decision making process—a systemic approach that uses research to inform decisions at *all levels*—offers the greatest promise for harm and risk reduction and the potential for a tremendous return...”

The use of research to inform criminal justice policy decisions in Wisconsin has grown exponentially in the last decade. This can be seen in Wisconsin’s communities with the development of local CJCCs, the establishment of the state CJCC, and the expansion of the Treatment Alternatives and Diversion (TAD) program.

### *Moving Forward*

A strong partnership of state and local stakeholders has emerged during the development of the EBDM initiative in Wisconsin. Specific EBDM initiative activities in our state are outlined in more detail in other position papers available <https://cjcc.doj.wi.gov>. In Wisconsin, EBDM principles have formed a strong foundation to achieve a shared vision – *a criminal justice system that reduces harm, promotes fairness, and contributes to the quality of life in Wisconsin.*

### Resources

State Criminal Justice Coordinating Council website: <https://cjcc.doj.wi.gov>

EBDM One Less website: <http://ebdmoneless.org>

National Institute of Corrections EBDM webpage: <http://info.nicic.gov/ebdm>